



LYME DISEASE FACT SHEET

What is Lyme disease?

Lyme disease is a disease which can cause skin, joint, heart and nervous system problems. It may affect people of all ages, possibly continuing months or years if not properly treated. Lyme disease is the most commonly diagnosed tick-borne disease in the U.S.

How can you or your pet be exposed to Lyme disease?

Lyme disease is transmitted by the bite of an infected tick. The black-legged or deer tick (*Ixodes scapularis*) and the western black-legged tick (*Ixodes pacificus*) are the primary vectors in the U.S. for Lyme disease.

What are the symptoms in humans?

Humans can begin showing symptoms 7 to 14 days after a bite from an infected tick. Early symptoms may be “flu-like” such as fever, headache, chills, muscle and joint pains, and a rash. The rash begins as a small circular area around the tick bite within 3 days to a month and can get larger to create a “bulls-eye” appearance. Symptoms may not occur for weeks, months, or years after a tick bite. The disease can affect the heart, nervous system and joints. Some victims can develop paralysis of the face, severe headache, stiff neck, fatigue and numbness of the arms and legs.

What are the symptoms in animals?

Animals begin showing symptoms 2-5 months after a bite from an infected tick. Pet owners and veterinarians have reported Lyme in dogs, cats, horses, cattle, sheep, and goats. Symptoms of Lyme disease in animals are similar to the symptoms in humans. It is important for pets to avoid tick contact and be under care of a veterinarian.

How can I protect myself from ticks to avoid Lyme disease?

- **Know where to expect ticks.** Ticks live in moist and humid environments, particularly in or near wooded or grassy areas. You may come into contact with ticks during outdoor activities around your home or when walking through vegetation such as leaf litter or shrubs. Always walk in the center of trails, in order to avoid ticks.
- **Use a repellent with DEET** (on skin or clothing) or permethrin (on clothing) and wear long sleeves, long pants and socks. Products containing permethrin can be used to treat boots, clothing and camping gear which can remain protective through several washings. Repellents containing 20% or more DEET (N, N-diethyl-m-toluamide) can be applied to the skin, and they can protect up to several hours. Always follow product instructions! Parents should apply this product to their children, avoiding the hands, eyes, and mouth.
- **Wear light-colored clothing**, which allows you to see ticks crawling on your clothing.

- **Tuck your pant legs into your socks** so that ticks cannot crawl up inside of your pant legs. Some ticks can crawl down into shoes and are small enough to crawl through most socks. When traveling in areas with lone star ticks (which are associated with Southern Tick-Associated Rash Illness, Ehrlichiosis, and possibly Rocky Mountain spotted fever) you should examine your feet and ankles to ensure that ticks are not attached.

What is the correct way to remove a tick?

Using tweezers, grasp the tick firmly as close to the skin as possible. Pull the tick with a firm and steady motion until it is removed. Don't pull back sharply, as this may tear the mouthparts from the body, leaving them embedded in the skin. The mouthparts alone generally cannot transmit disease because the tick can no longer pump saliva into the skin. However, to prevent secondary infection from germs that may be on the mouthparts, remove the mouthparts as you would a splinter. Clean the skin with soap and water. The tick can be flushed down the toilet. Note the date when the tick was removed.

Do not crush the tick because the blood could get on your skin and infect you. Do not use a match, nail polish, or any other substance to remove a tick.

How do I protect my pets from ticks?

If you find a tick on your pet, follow the same procedure for removal. Check with your veterinarian. There are many approved chemicals for flea and tick prevention on pets.

How do I protect my yard from ticks?

- Modify your landscape to create Tick-Safe Zones. Provide a vegetation-free area by keeping play areas and playground equipment away from shrubs, bushes, and other vegetation. Also, regularly remove leaf litter and clear tall grasses and brush around homes, and place wood chips or gravel between lawns and wooded areas to keep ticks away from recreational areas.
- Use a chemical control agent. Effective tick control chemicals are available for use by the homeowner, or they can be applied by a professional pest control expert, and even limited applications can greatly reduce the number of ticks. A single springtime application of acaricide can reduce the population of ticks that cause Lyme disease by 68–100%.
- Discourage deer. Removing plants that attract deer and constructing physical barriers may help discourage deer from entering your yard and bringing ticks with them.

Where can I get more information on Lyme disease?

www.cdc.gov

www.dshs.state.tx.us

Source of information: Centers for Disease Control (CDC)

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